ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC NUMBER	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.
ED002681	N.A.	N.A.

DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW

4. AUTHOR(S): N.A.

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED:
Migratory Labor in Wisconsin Agriculture

6. PUBLICATION TITLE: N.A.

7. EDITOR(S): N.A.

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN
ORG. Wisconsin State Employment Service,
ST. 105 S. Blair Street,
CITY, STATE Madison 1, Wisconsin
TELE. EXT.
INST/LOC CODE

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE
Wisconsin State Employment Service
Madison, Wisconsin

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
N.A.	N.A.	4/62	13

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TYPE OF REPORT
PROPOSAL ☐
IN-PROGRESS ☐
FINAL ☒
FOLLOW-UP ☐

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA

15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR: report

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

migrant	seasonal employment	migratory labor	church groups	trade unions
	government agencies	migration patterns	Spanish-American migrant	
	characteristics			

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

A series of charts related to migratory workers in Wisconsin is presented. The tables depict the seasonal agricultural and food processing employment timetable of major crop activities; utilization of migrant workers in such activities; migrant workers registered by district offices, state of residence, state of last employment,and state of next employment; number of scheduled workers reporting and failing to report; and characteristics of migrant workers.

The seasonal labor force begins in May and continues through the summer. Spanish-speaking workers in family groups make up the bulk of the seasonal migratory labor force. They migrate long distances and usually come from previous employment before entering Wisconsin. Cooperation is needed from employment service agencies to bring workers and employers together. There is no guarantee that those who make preseason commitments will keep them, but reliability is better than expected. All season workers are required to register. Workers usually travel in single family units or crews.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT.	21. CONTRACT NO. / PROJECT NO.
	22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT	
	23. DURATION OF PROJECT	U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

ERIC Form 1

ED002681

MIGRATORY LABOR IN WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE

1961

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

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Wisconsin State Employment Service

WSES-3034

J0614

MIGRATORY LABOR IN WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE

1961

FARM LABOR SERVICE

WISCONSIN STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

A. Thomas Rose, Director

A Division of

THE INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN

M. F. Schimenz, Chairman

R. G. Knutson
Commissioner

C. E. Lauri
Commissioner

Madison, Wisconsin Issued April, 1962

FD002681

FORWARD

The plight of the migratory worker has in recent years been increasingly in the spotlight. Church groups, citizens committees, trade unions, government agencies and congressional committees are attacking this problem. Much progress has been made; much more is needed.

One of the basic problems which must be overcome in order to help the migratory worker is this matter of getting accurate up-to-date information on these workers. There is a general tendency on the part of many groups who are eager to help the migrant to generalize and lump all migratory workers into one category. This confuses the picture. The fact of the matter is that there are many different kinds of migratory workers. For instance, they differ in their migration patterns; they differ ethnically and tempermentally. In short - just as there are many different forms of unemployment and each must be treated differently, so must we approach the problems facing the migratory worker. This report seeks to shed some light on the migratory workers employed in Wisconsin.

TABLE 1

SUMMARY OF SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PROCESSING EMPLOYMENT

TIMETABLE OF MAJOR CROP ACTIVITIES

WISCONSIN 1961

REPORTED EMPLOYMENT 1/	BI-WEEKLY REPORTING PERIOD											
	MAY 15	MAY 30	JUNE 15	JUNE 30	JULY 15	JULY 31	AUG. 15	AUG. 31	SEPT. 15	SEPT. 30	OCT. 15	OCT. 31
TOTAL AGRI. & FOOD PROCESSING EMPLOYMENT	1526	2183	3986	12690	21073	29243	27031	25135	18554	11433	8735	4471
INTER-STATE MIGRATORY WORKERS	528	716	1752	4217	6588	13763	12115	6796	3549	2154	1457	651
INTER-STATE WORKERS AS PERCENT OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT	35	33	44	33	31	47	45	27	19	19	17	15
CHERRIES-HARVEST						XXXXXXXXXXX						
CUCUMBERS-HARVEST						XXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX					
PEAS - HARVEST				XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX					
SUGAR BEETS-THIN & BLOCK	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX								
SWEET CORN-HARVEST							XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX			
VEGETABLES 2/ PLANT, WEED HARVEST	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXX

1/ SOURCE ES-223 ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT

2/ INCLUDES: CABBAGE, CELERY, LETTUCE, MINT, ONIONS, POTATOES, RED BEETS, TOMATOES, LIMA BEANS, AND FRESH MARKET VEGETABLES.

Migratory workers, with some exceptions, normally start work in Wisconsin agriculture about the first of May. These early workers are employed in the sugar beet and vegetable farms. As the season progresses, this work force increases gradually until the middle of June when the demand for workers increases sharply with the start of the pea pack. By the middle of July, as the cucumber and cherry harvests get underway, a large influx of migratory workers move into the state from the sugar beet areas of Minnesota, North Dakota and other states. During 1961 the peak employment of migratory workers occurred during the latter part of July when they made up 47% of the seasonal labor force.

Upon completion of the cherry harvest, some migrant workers move in to the corn pack in Wisconsin while the majority head south to work in the tomato harvests of Illinois and Indiana, or in the cotton harvest in other states. Some workers return to their homes in order that the children might start to school.

TABLE 2

UTILIZATION OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN
MAJOR WISCONSIN CROP ACTIVITIES

1961

CROP ACTIVITY	INITIAL JOB	SECOND JOB	THIRD JOB	TOTAL JOBS FILLED
TOTAL	12,686	1,466	258	14,410
CHERRIES - HARVEST	4,688	488	2	5,178
CUCUMBERS - HARVEST	4,889	442	33	5,364
PEAS HARVEST	952	16		968
SUGAR BEETS THIN & BLOCK	611			611
SWEET CORN HARVEST	106	336	137	579
(1) OTHER CANNING CROPS - HARVEST	671	73	81	825
(2) VEGETABLES - PLANT, WEED & HARVEST	769	111	5	885

(1) INCLUDES CABBAGE, LIMA BEANS, SNAP BEANS AND RED BEETS

(2) INCLUDES CABBAGE, CELERY, LETTUCE, MINT, ONIONS, POTATOES AND FRESH MARKET VEGETABLES.

One of the basic objectives of the Annual Worker Plan is to schedule migratory workers to successive job opportunities and thereby minimize the periods of unemployment and underemployment that normally plague the migrant worker. While this scheduling process usually involves the movement of migratory workers between states, there is also scheduling within a state as evidenced by the above table. In some instances workers will arrive before a crop is ready to be harvested. This is a common occurrence in the Wautoma area. The Wisconsin State Employment Service has been successful in utilizing this temporary surplus of workers in the Wautoma area by an organized dayhaul type of program whereby the migrant workers are employed on a day-to-day basis on vegetable farms within a 50-mile commuting distance of Wautoma. The utilization of migrant workers in Wisconsin is evidenced by the fact that in 1961, 12,686 workers filled 14,410 jobs.

TABLE 3

MIGRANT WORKERS REGISTERED

BY WSES DISTRICT OFFICES

1959 - 1961

DISTRICT OFFICES	1961		1960		1959	
	UNITS	WORKERS	UNITS	WORKERS	UNITS	WORKERS
TOTAL	973	12,686 1/	783	10,975	860	11,339
APPLETON	9	113	14	115	-	-
ASHLAND	-	-	-	-	1	19
BEAVER DAM	30	768	53	1,071	24	838
EAU CLAIRE	-	-	1	35	1	21
FOND DU LAC	34	554	29	506	25	427
JANESVILLE	-	-	1	23	-	-
KENOSHA	15	97	5	37	15	61
LACROSSE	3	90	5	75	9	62
LANCASTER	-	-	1	63	1	26
MADISON	6	113	9	161	18	383
MANITOWOC	3	188	9	226	7	204
MILWAUKEE	2	10	2	14	3	10
RACINE	10	58	11	79	13	73
RHINELANDER	-	-	-	-	2	16
SHEBOYGAN	42	388	22	312	19	212
WATERTOWN	1	8	18	202	13	172
WAUKESHA	5	96	7	191	17	426
OCONTO 2/	90	844	75	673	117	1,004
STURGEON BAY 3/	373	4,860	171	2,937	241	3,550
WAUTOMA 2/	350	4,499	350	4,255	334	3,835

1/ DOES NOT INCLUDE 5,039 CHILDREN UNDER 16 YEARS OF AGE
2/ SEASONAL OFFICE - CUCUMBER HARVEST
3/ SEASONAL OFFICE - CHERRY HARVEST

It is the policy of the Wisconsin State Employment Service to register migrant crews during their employment in the State. District office personnel follow up on crews that have been scheduled into the State under the Annual Worker Program. Free wheelers are also registered. In every instance crews are asked whether or not they are going to keep their next commitment. Uncommitted crews are offered the services of the Wisconsin State Employment Service in securing a subsequent job.

It is estimated that over 95% of the migratory workers are contacted by the Employment Service during their employment in Wisconsin.

Evidence of the high labor demand of the cherry and cucumber harvests is indicated by the fact that these crops accounted for over two-thirds of the migratory workers employed in the State.

The effects on the supply of workers of good and poor picking prospects is illustrated by the fact that during 1960 as the direct result of poor yields, 2937 migrant workers were employed in the cherry harvest as contrasted to the 4,860 workers employed during 1961 when a bumper crop was harvested.

TABLE V

MIGRANT WORKERS REGISTERED
BY STATE OF RESIDENCE
1959-61

STATE OF RESIDENCE	NO. OF MIGRANTS REGISTERED - 1961		NO. OF MIGRANTS REGISTERED - 1960		NO. OF MIGRANTS REGISTERED - 1959	
	UNITS	WORKERS	UNITS	WORKERS	UNITS	WORKERS
TOTAL	973	12,686	783	10,975	860	11,339
ARIZONA			2	19	3	23
ARKANSAS	11	392	10	409	6	304
FLORIDA	8	68	3	77	5	60
ILLINOIS	6	53	7	186	4	17
LOUISIANA	10	309	10	184	11	235
MICHIGAN	2	17	1	4	1	4
MINNESOTA	2	16	1	10	1	17
MISSISSIPPI	11	359	12	373	11	387
MISSOURI	18	435	8	211	14	327
NEW MEXICO	1	70	1	54	1	39
OKLAHOMA	2	16	2	11	1	2
TEXAS	876	10,770	716	9,378	774	9,577
WISCONSIN	13	88	10	59	16	159
OTHER STATES 1/	13	93	—	—	12	190

1/ INCLUDES ALABAMA, CALIFORNIA, COLORADO, GEORGIA, IDAHO, INDIANA, IOWA, KENTUCKY, NEBRASKA, NEW JERSEY, NORTH DAKOTA, OHIO, PUERTO RICO, SOUTH DAKOTA, TENNESSEE AND WASHINGTON.

Spanish-American workers in family groups make up the bulk of the migratory work force seasonally employed in Wisconsin. During 1961 of the 12,686 workers registered, 10,770 were home based in Texas. Of the 10,770 workers from Texas, 2,793 migrated directly from Texas to Wisconsin. 7,987 workers were employed in some other state before coming to Wisconsin.

Approximately 1,100 migrant workers from Mississippi, Missouri and Louisiana were employed in Wisconsin during 1961. These workers generally were adult male negro workers and included several hundred college students. Usually these workers are employed by one employer in Wisconsin and return to their home communities at the completion of their work. The increasing use of mobile pea viners is cutting into the demand for these workers.

TABLE 5

MIGRANT WORKERS REGISTERED

BY STATE OF LAST EMPLOYMENT

1959-1961

STATE OF LAST EMPLOYMENT	NO. OF MIGRANTS REGISTERED - 1961		NO. OF MIGRANTS REGISTERED - 1960		NO. OF MIGRANTS REGISTERED - 1959	
	UNITS	WORKERS	UNITS	WORKERS	UNITS	WORKERS
TOTAL	973	12,686	783	10,975	860	11,339
ALABAMA	3	93	3	68	3	124
ARIZONA			1	54	2	45
ARKANSAS	15	332	10	407	9	373
CALIFORNIA	2	33	1	3		
COLORADO	2	32	10	121	12	77
DELAWARE	1	46	6	203	4	93
FLORIDA	6	69	3	40	2	60
GEORGIA			2	75		
IDAHO	14	426	11	285	11	185
ILLINOIS	76	1,060	25	1,005	26	645
INDIANA	9	97	8	70	7	27
IOWA	8	107	7	103	8	118
KANSAS			5	25		
KENTUCKY	1	67	1	24	3	40
LOUISIANA	10	284	5	92	6	155
MICHIGAN	9	69	11	97	9	114
MINNESOTA	320	3,157	215	2,154	264	2,492
MISSISSIPPI	11	331	12	373	11	387
MISSOURI	22	502	16	452	23	596
MONTANA	61	927	79	828	70	814
NEBRASKA	14	98	11	115	18	219
N. DAKOTA	119	1,271	107	1,045	102	942
OHIO	8	95	4	87	5	86
S. DAKOTA	6	134	6	129	11	255
TEXAS	218	2,793	195	2,779	217	3,086
UTAH			5	64	1	6
WASHINGTON	2	60	1	6	1	6
WISCONSIN	11	78	10	67	15	154
WYOMING	14	209	13	204	15	135
OTHER STATES 1/	11	316			5	105

1/ INCLUDES GEORGIA, OKLAHOMA, OREGON, PUERTO RICO, SOUTH CAROLINA, TENNESSEE AND VIRGINIA.

An evaluation of the movement of migratory workers indicates that the Spanish-American migrant travels long distances to the job site. It is interesting to note that in many instances crews coming into Wisconsin do not migrate directly from their home state, but have previous job commitments in some other state. Wisconsin is dependent on securing migratory workers from the sugar beet areas of Minnesota and North Dakota. It is entirely possible that with the rapid mechanization and changes in cultural practices in sugar beets, this supply might dwindle to the point where Wisconsin would have to look elsewhere for workers to harvest the cherry and cucumber crops.

TABLE 6

MIGRANT WORKERS SCHEDULED TO WISCONSIN

NUMBER REPORTED AND NUMBER FAILED TO REPORT

1961

STATES ISSUING ES-369	ES-369'S RECEIVED BY WSES COVERING NO. OF:		NUMBER REPORTED TO WISCONSIN		NUMBER FAILED TO REPORT	
	UNITS	WORKERS	UNITS	WORKERS	UNITS	WORKERS
TOTAL 1961	1,156	13,272	566	8,595	590	4,677
ARIZONA	3	43	2	14	1	29
ARKANSAS	30	434	15	352	15	82
CALIFORNIA						
COLORADO	1	7			1	7
IDAHO	1	22	1	8		14
ILLINOIS	1	2	1	2		
INDIANA	11	200	4	60	7	140
IOWA	18	134	9	51	9	83
LOUISIANA	20	738	9	356	11	382
MINNESOTA	407	3,111	156	1,743	251	1,368
MISSISSIPPI	16	443	9	302	7	141
MISSOURI	24	785	14	476	10	309
MONTANA	13	119	2	44	11	75
NEBRASKA	27	226	6	64	21	162
NORTH DAKOTA	204	1,558	88	923	116	635
OHIO	14	158	7	79	7	79
TEXAS	363	5,263	241	4,092	122	1,171
WASHINGTON	2	12	1	12	1	0
WYOMING	1	17	1	17		

In order to bring the migrant workers and employers together, employment service agencies in labor demand and supply states must cooperate fully to achieve the desired result. Pre-season scheduling of thousands of migrant workers requires that labor demand state agencies secure employer orders well in advance of the date of need. Interstate orders are cleared to secure workers in supply states. The supply states contact available workers and attempt to negotiate (firm) job commitments.

Upon completion of a schedule of employment, a Form ES 369-Migratory Labor Employment Record is prepared by the supply state agency and distributed to the states listed on the crew's itinerary. This form records the name and home address of the crew leader or family head, unit composition, name and address of employers scheduled for job arrangement and the approximate dates of each crop activity.

Table 6 shows the number of migrant units scheduled to Wisconsin by the listed states and the number of migrants covered by Form ES-369.

There is no guarantee that migrant labor who accepts pre-season employment will fulfill the commitment. Over 35% of the 13,272 job acceptances of workers in 1961 could not be located and presumably failed to report. However, the records of the past several years indicate that the percentage of workers who conform to a pre-season schedule has steadily increased. Many migrant workers are scheduled several months in advance of the actual work date, and it is encouraging to note that the reliability of these workers is much better than commonly thought to be.

The past five years show that approximately 60% of scheduled workers reported and were registered by Wisconsin State Employment Service. 4,091 unscheduled workers were employed in 1961, and these represented the so-called "free wheelers" who do not desire the assistance of the Annual Worker Plan in securing employment.

Classification of workers as "free wheelers" does not imply that Employment Service assistance is not given to this group. Many workers are guided to Wisconsin or recruited and referred through the interstate clearance process even though not formally covered by the Annual Worker Plan. Wisconsin procedure requires registration of all migrant workers and an offer of service in securing subsequent employment.

TABLE 7

MIGRANT WORKERS REGISTERED BY

STATE OF NEXT EMPLOYMENT

1959 - 1961

STATE OF NEXT EMPLOYMENT	1961		1960		1959	
	NO. OF UNITS	NO. OF WORKERS	NO. OF UNITS	NO. OF WORKERS	NO. OF UNITS	NO. OF WORKERS
TOTAL	973	12,686	772	10,904	846	11,201
ARIZONA	1	6	6	114	8	102
ARKANSAS	8	173	7	298	4	191
CALIFORNIA	5	52				
COLORADO	1	2	1	10	1	2
FLORIDA	9	113	4	88	4	43
IDAHO	2	119	4	74		
ILLINOIS	125	1,993	94	1,488	129	1,652
INDIANA	118	1,495	29	800	39	949
IOWA	30	213	28	259	47	422
LOUISIANA	10	284	7	116	10	226
MICHIGAN	6	75	7	57	6	55
MINNESOTA	41	447	29	367	42	462
MISSISSIPPI	11	331	12	373	9	331
MISSOURI	17	343	17	383	17	464
NEBRASKA	2	12	2	31	3	21
NEW MEXICO			2	57		
NORTH DAKOTA	41	438	43	559	51	687
OHIO	53	647	32	360	17	246
OKLAHOMA	22	191	17	344	31	392
TENNESSEE	5	153	3	29	2	43
TEXAS	455	5,511	428	5,097	419	4,731
WISCONSIN	11	88			7	192

The movement of migratory workers out of Wisconsin into other states for the next crop harvest follows a well-established pattern. The bulk of this movement in terms of timing is at the completion of the cherry and cucumber harvest in the middle of August and early September.

Most of the workers move south and go into the tomato harvest and cotton harvest, and eventually return to their home bases.

TABLE 8

CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRANT WORKERS

TYPE OF WORKER	NO. OF UNITS	NO. OF FAMILIES	NO. OF WORKERS	NO. OF INDIVIDUALS			
				TOTAL	MALE OVER 16	FEMALE OVER 16	UNDER 16
TOTAL	973	2,319	12,686	17,725	7,984	4,702	5,039
FAMILY UNIT	581	581	2,936	4,677	1,680	1,330	1,667
CREWS	366	1,738	9,258	12,556	5,820	3,364	3,372
OTHER	26		492	492	484	8	

Annual Worker Plan records classify migratory worker groups as family units, crews and others. Composition of the groups, the mode of travel, type of housing required and choice of crop activity vary in each classification.

Family units are composed of the immediate members of a single family who travel and work together as an independent unit. Since they own their own autos, they are not dependent upon a crew leader for transportation and his choice of jobs.

Employers provide individual cabins, farm homes or motel-type housing for family units. Each family provides its own bedding, cooking and eating utensils, and employers provide the necessary beds, tables, chairs, stoves and fuel for cooking and heating. Housing and furnishings are provided free by employers.

Family units usually prefer employment in the so-called "stoop labor" crops. These crops provide a longer duration of employment with less frequent moves between jobs, and also provide employment for the older children in the family.

Crews are defined as two or more family units who travel and work together as an identifiable group.

In any discussion of migrant crews the crew leader is an important and often controversial figure. He recruits the families and unattached workers who make up his crew, provides transportation in his buses or trucks, usually provides the initial financing for the trip, negotiates employment with the grower or food processor, and often acts as the field boss of his crew.

Small crews of two or three families are seldom under the direction and control of such a leader. While the families travel and work together as a unit, it is often an informal association composed of units with family ties. In these cases the leader is usually one of the workers who has better than average language and bargaining ability who is chosen by the families to represent them in negotiations with the employers.

Large crews of four or more families are usually under the direction of an individual who is a crew leader in the accepted sense of the term. Families who cannot afford an auto depend upon a crew leader for transportation in his bus or truck, and thereby forfeit the right to choose their own jobs. However, families who own their own cars are often anxious to join a crew whose leader has a reputation for getting a "good deal" for his workers.

Housing for the families in a crew is similar to that provided for independent family units. If a crew includes a large number of unattached workers, employers provide barracks or dormitory-type housing. Unattached workers may arrange to eat with family groups, but more often are fed in the employer's mess hall. In the latter case the crew leader's family may be hired by the employer to operate the restaurant facilities.

Large crews, particularly those with unattached males, are most frequently employed by the canning industry which requires adult male workers for such heavy field jobs as pitching pea and lima vines and snapping sweet corn.

The other category includes groups composed of all adult male workers, most of whom were residents of Louisiana, Mississippi and Missouri. Several hundred Negro college students from those states are employed each year during their school vacation period in the pea and cherry harvests.

Groups in this category are invariably under the direction of a leader who furnishes bus or truck transportation. College students are usually led by a teacher or athletic coach.

Barracks-type housing is provided and workers are fed in employer-owned and operated mess halls.

Groups of this type are employed primarily in the pea and corn harvests because of the need for adult male labor, and in the cherry harvest which normally occurs between those two activities.